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Ndoni: *The River People and Their Igbo Family Ties*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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Ndoni is a community that is found in Rivers State, Nigeria, in the Ogba-Egbema-Ndoni Local Government Area(ONELGA). They are very close to the Niger River, and the place is full of Igbo people.

Ndoni is not just a small town; it has a profound history and a family tie that is connected to other Igbo people like the Ogbaru from Anambra state, Ukwuani in Delta state, and also some other states like the Rivers states. The kinship is connected with their blood and culture, it shows how the Ndoni people are linked with their brothers and sisters across the Niger Delta and beyond.

Ndoni is located on the eastern bank of the Niger River, close to where the Rivers Delta and Anambara states meet. Inside the ONELGA, which has headquarters in Omoku, and is a part of the big Igbo family on the south-south and southeast in Nigeria. The Ndoni people speak one dialect of Igbo that is very close to what they speak in Ogbaru and Ukwuani, even though it is almost the same. They are mostly farmers, fishermen, and business owners because the river gives them fish, and the land is very good for farming, such as yam, cassava, and rice. Christianity has taken over the town, but they are still holding on to some old traditions.

Population-wise, Ndoni is not a big town but a very strong community inside ONELGA, with over 258,700 people in the 2006 census. The people of Ndoni are very proud people who know their history and also know how to keep their culture alive.

For the Igbo people, kinship is everything to them, where you came from, who you marry, and how you associate with your people. Ndoni

has a very strong bond with their family, which brought them together with other Igbo groups, most especially the Ogbaru, Ukwuani, and some Anioma people from Delta state. The connection they have did not start today, it started during the time people were moving all around the Niger River, trading and settling down.

Ogbaru connection: Ogbaru from Anambra state are like Ndoni's big brother. Both of them are close to the Niger River, and they share so many things like language, farming style, and even how to take care of their family. Some people said Ndoni had been from Ogbaru for a long time, or they were the same people who split because of the river. The name "ogbasu" Or "Ndi Osimili" (People of the Niger) show both places because they have a strong link.

The link of Ukwuani: The people of Ukwuani in Delta state are another kin to Ndoni. They sometimes call themselves Ndokwa, and they speak the a dialect of Igbo language which is very close to the Ndoni people.

The river that joins them facilitates business and marriages. Some Ndoni people have cousins from the people of Ukwuani, and they share some market days and also celebrate some festivals together like the New Yam festival (Iri Ji).

Ndoni has ties with more Anioma people, like the Aboh part of Ukwuani, Aboh is very large in marketing and business, and the people of Ndoni join their boats to meet them. So, the mix-up has made some of the people of Ndoni run to Delta.

Even if the state lines were separated now, the family feeling is still there.

In Ndoni: Their kinship is tight. They have an Umunna group of people that comes from one ancestor. These umunna are the ones controlling the lands and marriages, and they settle their fights. If you give birth in Ndoni, your next of kin can stretch to the nearby village or even cross the river. Marriages join families more; a man from Ndoni can marry a woman from Ogbaru or in Ukwuani areas, and they can call

themselves “nna” (Father) or “nne (mother). That’s a sign of respect.

Ndoni was very strong before the white people came. They have their own king, they handle their things without the help of outsiders. Niger River is the big road that makes them meet people like traders, fishermen, and even warriors. The spoken story that talked about the Ndoni and the Aboh was in a navy fight for control of the river, but they still shared language and culture.

In colonial times, Ndoni was under the southern protectorate and later joined the River State in 1967 when states started. Before then, they were ruling with the Aboh division, showing that kinship with the Igbo areas in present day delta existed from the old times. Business with the Ogbaru and the Ukwuani was very hot for them, so they carried fish, yam, and palm oil everywhere in the river. Even when the white people’s church landed in the 1900s, The people of Ndoni did not trash their roots; they mixed it with new ways.

The Ndoni people live in the river, so fishing and farming are their life skills. The same water that is feeding them joins them with the ogbaru, Ukwuani and the Anioma. They normally use boats to go to the market, and this business helps families grow across borders. The Igbo marketing system Eke, Orie, Afor, and Nkow are working for the Ndoni, and you will see the Ogbaru and Ukwuani traders coming to sell their goods in the Ndoni market.

Festivals like the New Yam Festival are another thing that brings them together. The Ndoni people celebrate their kin, and sometimes, you will see family from Delta or Anambara joining them. The languages are also helping. The Igbo language that the Ndoni people speak can mix with the Ogbaru or the Ukwuani, so they do not struggle to speak to themselves each time they meet.

Today, the people of Ndoni are still holding onto their kinship, but life has changed a little for them. Oil and gas, which are full in ONELGA, bring money, but they also bring problems—pollution and fighting on the land. The river that joins them brings problems like floods or oil

spills, and it is very hard for people to continue fishing and farming just like before. But still, the people of Ndoni are trying to keep their families strong.

Abroad, the people of Ndoni are joining groups like the Ndoni National Association USA to hold their culture and give a helping hand to one another.

Marriage and naming ceremonies are still bringing the Ogbaru, Ukwuani, and Ndoni people together, showing that their kinship is not a fading type. Even with the state line, they see themselves as one big Igbo family that is holding the Niger River.

The people of Ndoni are a very small and mighty community that has a big family stretch. Their kinship with the ogbaru, Ukwuani and the people of Anioma is like the rope that the Niger River tied. They are the river people who know how to farm, fish, and trade, and this kind of life has brought them to be like brothers and sisters for many years. Even with the oil problem and modern life, The people of Ndoni are showing their family and culture that it is something that can not be broken easily.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chukwunwike Ossai

An enthusiast in tech with deep passion for studying and showcasing the vibrant cultural heritage of southern Nigeria . Combining my skill with my obsession towards African history and traditions to create contributions that impacts the digital space.



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